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American Scholarship on Soviet Called Dangerously Inadequate

Report cites diminished interest in Eastern Europe among U.S. academics

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Research and scholarship on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are so badly on the decline in this country that U.S. foreign policy and national security could be seriously undermined, according to a report by the International Research & Exchanges Board here.

While American scholars' interest in Soviet affairs and foreign policy has been diminishing over the past decade, the Soviet effort in such fields has expanded dramatically, the report suggests.

It includes three papers that, taken together, compare recent developments in American scholarship with developments over the past 25 years in the Soviet Union.

In one paper, Walter D. Connor, director of Soviet and East European studies at the Foreign Service Institute and a visiting professor at the University of Virginia, says that the volume and quality of American work on the Soviet bloc rose from the late 1950's until about 1970 but has been declining since.

"The effect, against a backdrop of turbulence in Eastern Europe, growing Soviet power, and penetration into new regions, is a growing inadequacy of the American Soviet and East European enterprise," Mr. Connor says.

The number of U.S. specialists in those areas could be sharply reduced by the retirement of older researchers during the 1980's, he adds.

"The Soviet Union probably has 3 times as many academic specialists working on U.S. foreign policy as we have working on Soviet foreign policy."

Mr. Connor cites one recent estimate that only about 1,100 scholars in universities, government, and private organizations are now working on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. According to the most conservative estimate, he says, the United States needs at least 1,700 people in those fields.

The biggest gaps are in economics, the politics of Eastern Europe, sociology, and studies of the various nationalities that make up the Soviet Union, he says.

'Serious Depletion of Expertise'

In a second paper, Robert Legvold, director of a project on the Soviet Union at the Council on Foreign Relations, says the United States "now suffers from a serious depletion of expertise on Soviet foreign policy" in both the government and the universities.

"Were we to search the country's universities and research organizations, we would not find a single person who has studied closely the last 10 years of Soviet policy in Southern Africa, toward NATO, or even on the evolution of international eco-

nomics relations," Mr. Legvold says. "The gaps in our knowledge are tremendous."

For the last decade, he adds, those gaps have been growing. "Far from having kept pace with change in Soviet policy toward traditional areas of concern, let alone having addressed new subjects of importance, research in this country has fallen far behind.

"Each year over the last decade the number of systematic foreign-policy studies has dwindled."

Specifically, Mr. Legvold reports, "we have had no major study of the evolution of Soviet policy toward SALT [the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty] since the process began 12 years ago; no major study of the Sino-Soviet conflict since the late 1960's; no significant study of Soviet policy in Africa in the 1970's; and, most amazingly, no even moderately ambitious study of Soviet policy toward the United States over the last decade."

The lack of "carefully researched studies," he says, has meant that "our view of the Soviet Union is shaped increasingly by

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popular impressions, *a priori* analyses, built from superficial reflections on the Soviet actions that most catch the eye, and by traditional habits of thought.

"The criticism is truer of Congress, the business and other professional communities, the media, and the public at large, but even in the classroom and the specialized agencies of government the decline in scholarship leaves its mark."

Frequently, Mr. Legvold says, "courses on contemporary Soviet policy are taught from the works of international-affairs generalists or specialists in other areas. Increasingly, government analysts carry on without a literature to enrich analysis or give perspective to daily concerns."

U.S. universities, he adds, are not preparing the new scholars needed to expand the number of experts on Soviet foreign policy and to replace the retiring older specialists in the field.

In recent years, the number of Ph.D.'s awarded by all American universities in some aspect of Soviet foreign policy has averaged only eight a year, he notes.

"To the extent that tomorrow's leadership in the study of Soviet foreign policy depends on today's Ph.D.'s, the future is not encouraging," he says.

Mr. Legvold adds that American specialists on Soviet foreign policy generally have not taken advantage of new opportunities to interview Soviet officials or to conduct "field research" in the Soviet Union.

Persistence Required

"The day has not arrived when an American scholar can walk into the Soviet Foreign Ministry and expect to meet with the foreign minister or reach the aides of the Soviet leadership, or contact senior Soviet military personnel within the general staff," Mr. Legvold writes.

Even so, he notes, if they are persistent, scholars can now speak with senior political commentators, university faculty members and other researchers, and middle-level officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The process, however, is slow and encumbered and for the moment the returns are limited. Nevertheless, the point is that not much is being done to make the most of existing opportunities," Mr. Legvold says. "For all the obstacles facing the study of Soviet foreign policy, Soviet specialists in this country are not beginning to do what they could."

While American research on Soviet

foreign policy has been dwindling, Mr. Legvold reports that Soviet research on American policy has been expanding dramatically. "I do not mean to imply that they have solved the problem of expertise and we have not," he adds. "In many respects Soviet area studies remain exceedingly thin and rudimentary, overconcentrated in one or two institutes, and decidedly uneven in quality."

However, he says, Soviet research appears to be ahead of American research in at least three respects:

► "As a rough guess, the Soviet Union probably has three times as many academic specialists working on U.S. foreign policy as we have working on Soviet foreign policy."

► "In terms of distribution, the Soviet Union has a far superior coverage of subjects where American studies of Soviet foreign policy tend to be without any order and marked by enormous gaps."

► "In terms of dynamism, in the Soviet Union international-affairs studies, in general, and area studies, in particular, are thriving, while here they are marking time at best, and probably losing ground."

7,400 Specialists in Moscow

In the third paper in the report, Daniel C. Matuszewski, associate director of the International Research & Exchanges Board, argues that while much of the Soviet effort to study international relations may still be shaped by ideological goals, it has grown dramatically and become increasingly sophisticated in recent years.

"Over the course of the last 25 years," Mr. Matuszewski says, "the Soviet Academy of Sciences has put in place a network of institutes designed to carry out comprehensive data collection and assessment essential to policy formation in international relations."

"There are over 7,400 specialists working in 12 key Moscow institutes alone."

The "intensity and quality of this unique enterprise," Mr. Matuszewski says, "can no longer be ignored by either the Western scholar or the Western political analyst."

The board, known as IREX, is a non-profit organization that administers U.S. exchanges with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the humanities and social sciences. Copies of its report—*Foreign Area Research in the National Interest: American & Soviet Perspectives*—are available for \$5 each from IREX, 655 Third Avenue, New York 10017.